

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 BIB-01 MCT-01 /070 W

-----211213Z 126669 /17

P R 211100Z JAN 77

FM AMEMASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6587

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, CE

SUBJECT: STRIKE DISCUSSED IN SRI LANKA PARLIAMENT

REF: COLOMBO 0225

1. SUMMARY: THE FIRST PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE SINCE THE STRIKE WAS MARKED BY ANGRY ATTACKS BY THE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) ON THE GOVERNMENT. THE DEBATE ON THE STRIKE AND NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION CALLED FOR BY THE JOINT OPPOSITION WAS PUT OFF UNTIL FEBRUARY. ONLY ONE OF THE FOUR DISSIDENT SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) M.P.'S APPEARED IN PARLIAMENT COMMUNIST PARTY LEADER, PIETER KEUNEMAN, AND MOST OF HIS DEPUTIES WERE ALSO ABSENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY'S MEETING JANUARY 20, THE FIRST SINCE THE WAVE OF STRIKES WAS ENDED UNDER GOVERNMENT PRESSURE ONLY THREE DAYS BEFORE, THE GALLERIES WERE PACKED. SPECTATORS EXPECTED VERBAL FIREWORKS, DEFECTIONS FROM THE RULING PARTY, AND PERHAPS EVEN A COMMUNIST BREAK

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FROM THE UNITED FRONT COALITION. INSTEAD THE SPEAKER LED OFF WITH HIS MONTHLY RITUAL--READING THE PRESIDENT'S PROCLAMATION EXTENDING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY FOR THE SEVENTIETH TIME (SINCE MARCH 1971)--AND THE ASSEMBLY SPENT FIVE HOURS ON DEBATE OF ROUTINE MATTERS.

3. IT WAS ONLY AS ADJOURNMENT NEARED THAT THE OPPOSITION WAS GIVEN FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FREE DEBATE. TROTSKYITE LEADER N.M. PERERA LED OFF WITH A PREPARED STATEMENT CALLING THE STRIKE A VICTORIOUS AND HEROIC STRUGGLE (TO SNICKERS FROM THE GOVERNMENT BENCHES) BECAUSE OF THE EXEMPLARY SOLIDARITY SHOWN BY THE WORKERS. HE LAMBASTED THE "UNPRECEDENTED REPRESSIVE ACTION" AND THE "FASCIST BRUTALITY" USED TO PUT DOWN THE STRIKE. COMPARING THE PM TO "DICTATOR MARCOS", HE ACCUSED HER OF TURNING SRI LANKA INTO A POLICE STATE AND WARNED THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION OPEN TO THE WORKERS MIGHT BE THE OVERTHROW OF THE GOVERNMENT. CALMER SPOKESMEN FOR THE OPPOSITION UNITED NATIONAL PARTY ENDORSED PERERA'S COMMENTS AND CALLED FOR AN END TO THE BAN ON MEETINGS AND THE CONTINUING PRESS CENSORSHIP.

4. THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY TO THE OPPOSITION WAS DELIVERED BY FINANCE MINISTER FELIX R. DIAS BANDARANAIKE, WHO DID NOT ADDRESS HIMSELF TO THE MAIN POINTS AT ISSUE BUT INSTEAD TAUNTED THE LSSP ABOUT THE "HEROIC AND VICTORIOUS STRUGGLE." AFTER FIVE MINUTES OF SARCASM, LSSP FIREBRAND COLVIN R.DE SILVA COULD STAND NO MORE; RISING TO INTERRUPT, HE ASKED WHETHER GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN THE STRIKE HAD BEEN HEROIC AND PROCEEDED TO LEAD HIS PARTY MEMBEFS IN CRIES OF "SHAME\* SHAME\*" THE ASSEMBLY ADJOURNED ON THAT RANCOROUS NOTE.

5. IN RESPONSE TO A WARNING FROM THE UNPER THAT ANY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CENSORSHIP OF ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS WOULD BE AN ENCROACHMENT ON THE PRIVILEGES OF THE ASSEMBLY, THE SPEAKER RULED THT THE HOUSE WOULD BE ITS OWN CENSOR. HE THEN ANNOUNCED THAT A COMMITTEE OF HIMSELF,THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE, AND THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION WOULD PASS ON THE PROCEEDINGS. THE COMMITTEE MADE NO CUTS IN THE DEBATE TEXT AND NEWSWORTHY PORTIONS WERE PRINTED IN FULL IN THE NEXT DAYS'S PAPERS.

6. NOTABLE ABSENTEE AT THE ASSEMBLY SESSION WERE THREE OF THE FOUR SLFP DISSIDENTS AND MOST COMMUNISTS, MEMBERS OF PRIME MINISTER BANDARANAIKE'S RULING COALITION. ATTENDING EMBOFFS COULD SPOT ONLY ONE CP MEMBER, DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION, B. Y. TUDAWE. PIETER KEUNEMAN, CP LEADER AND MINISTER OF HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION, WAS DEFINITELY ABSENT. THE FRAGILE UNITY OF THE UNITED FRONT STILL EXISTS BUT IT WAS DEALT ANOTHER BLOW YESTERDAY BY A CP POLITBURO RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN END TO PRESS CENSORSHIP, TO THE BAN ON PUBLIC MEETINGS, AND TO THE EMBERGENCY REGULATION PROMULGATED DURING THE STRIKE.

7. THE DEBATE CALLED FOR BY THE OPPOSITION ON A NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AGAISNT THE GOVERNMENT OVER ITS HANDLING OF THE STRIKE WAS PUT OFF. THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE ANNOUNCED THAT THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE WOULD BE SCHEDULED FOR SOMETIME NEXT MONTH, POSSIBLY DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF FEBRUARY. THAT MOTION WILL BE GIVEN PRECEDENCE OVER ANOTHER PENDING NON-CONFIDENCE MOTION ON THE SUBJECT OF LAST NOVEMBER'S UNIVERSITY UPROAR. BOTH MOTIONS ARE DOOMED TO DEFEAT, GIVEN THE PM'S ALMOST TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY.

8. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID LITTLE DURING THE ASSEMBLY DEBATE, RESERVING HER FULL STATEMENT ON THE STRIKE FOR THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE. SHE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD "SHORTLY" RELEASE TRADE UNIONISTS ARRESTED DURING THE STRIKE.

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## Message Attributes

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